

STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID DREIER
SAN GABRIEL BASIN RESTORATION FUND
January 4, 2007

Madame Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that will continue to provide safe drinking water to Southern California. In 2000, Congress created the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund after the discovery of perchlorate and other harmful contaminants in the basin's groundwater. The fund initially authorized \$85 million in federal funding to assist the state and local government agencies as well as the private companies found responsible for the contamination to effectively implement a comprehensive clean up plan that would protect the safety of our region's drinking water supply. After evaluation, it is evident that an increase in this authorization is necessary. Therefore, I am introducing legislation to amend the original authorization by increasing the total amount by \$50 million.

The San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority (WQA) has done a tremendous job in administering the clean up program. In 1999, the WQA projected the cost of cleaning up the San Gabriel Basin at a total of \$320 million based on the level of contamination of the five original Operable Units of Baldwin Park, El Monte, South El Monte, Whittier Narrows and Puente Valley. Since the San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund was authorized by Congress in 2000, dramatically increased contamination levels have been identified in the South El Monte and Puente Valley Operable Units. This discovery has significantly increased both the capital and operation and maintenance costs of the projects. With the cost of inflation, increased energy costs and the higher contamination levels found, the total cost is now estimated at \$1 billion. Significantly, the WQA has a number of treatment plants that are already operating at full capacity with more coming on line in the near future.

The San Gabriel Groundwater Basin covers more than 160 square miles in Los Angeles County and is the primary source of drinking water for over 1.2 million people. Furthermore, natural groundwater flows from the San Gabriel Basin are allowing the contamination to spread into the Central Groundwater Basin, a vast 277 square-mile underground aquifer that provides drinking water to over half of Los Angeles County.

In working with the WQA and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation over the past decade on this regional solution, there is no doubt that this increase is warranted and will be utilized in the most effective way to continue to provide safe drinking water.

I look forward to working closely with the House Resources Committee, and with the new Water and Power Subcommittee Chairwoman Grace Napolitano. I am also pleased to have the support of my colleagues Adam Schiff, Hilda Solis and Gary Miller, who are cosponsors of this legislation.